

# ATTACKING INDOOR LEAD POISONING

EPA has achieved remarkable success in reducing the levels of lead in outdoor air by implementing the national phaseout of lead in motor gasoline and by taking corrective actions at individual stationary sources. Lead, however, still remains a public health concern and continues to threaten children exposed primarily from indoor sources such as paint and dust.

There have been significant reductions in the blood lead levels in children from the late 1970's to today. The reductions can be attributed to removing lead from gasoline and banning lead-soldered food cans. In addition, lead was removed from house paint in 1978.

In 1992 Congress enacted the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act known as Title X which provides for a comprehensive national approach to dealing with lead-based paint in the nation's homes. The law also calls on the EPA to provide basic information on lead to the American public. Under the 1018 Lead Disclosure Rule, potential home buyers and renters are assured of their right to know about lead hazards before buying or renting a home or apartment.

In addition, EPA is working with states and private industry to ensure that the public is informed of lead-based paint hazards and how to deal with these hazards.

EPA has worked with The National Safety Council to establish a National Lead Information Center Hotline and Clearinghouse. The Hotline (1-800-LEAD-FYI) is an automated recording in either English or Spanish that requests callers, addresses and sends out a package of information on lead poisoning prevention. The Clearinghouse (1-800-424-LEAD) is staffed by trained lead specialists who provide in-depth technical information on a range of lead-related issues to general public and professional audiences in both English and Spanish.

In Baltimore, the city is distributing more than 2,500 cleaning kits to educate residents about the problems posed by lead dust and to provide them with the means to reduce the risk they face. Distribution of the cleaning kits also gives health providers the opportunity to talk to residents about where to clean and why it is imperative to keep the dust down; the importance of diet, hand washing and continued testing of blood lead levels are also stressed. One community health nurse praised the program, noting that the hands-on education really makes a difference in the resident's understanding of the cleaning process. In some instances, the cleaning kits along with education and other interventions have been credited with reducing blood lead levels.

The success of this program highlights the importance of involving people in activities that affect their lives and the great benefits that can accrue from even modest expenditures. EPA will continue to pursue opportunities to use education and training to help reduce risks, especially those related to indoor air pollution.

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[Return to Air Quality](#)